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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 57TH INFANTRY (P.S.)  
REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM (PHILIPPINE DIVISION)  
AT ABUCAY, BATAAN, P.I., 10 JANUARY - 23 JANUARY 1942  
(BATAAN CAMPAIGN)  
(Personal Experience of a Regimental Adjutant)

Type of operation described: REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM IN THE DEFENSE

Major John E. Olson, Infantry  
ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO II

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Listed below are the references used in preparing this monograph. These fall generally into two classes. The first class includes articles and books written by correspondents or other personnel who were on Bataan, but who because of the nature of the campaign, had little opportunity to follow the day by day action of small units. As a result their statements about units smaller than divisions are usually vague and general in nature.

The second class are the reports and monographs written by officers who were on the spot and knew the facts but whose recollections were sometimes dim and uncertain because of their three and a half years of prison life that followed the surrender of Bataan.

The author served with the 57th Infantry (P.S.) from October 1939 until the fall of Bataan. He was assigned in various capacities to seven of the fifteen companies. As Regimental Adjutant from October 1941 until 9 April 1942 he was in a position to observe all operations of the regiment as a whole and most of the operations when battalions were acting separately. He was also fortunate after capture to be Personnel Adjutant and later Adjutant of the O'Donnell Prison Camp where Bataan prisoners were incarcerated. As a result he was able to secure paper and pencils when other men were being deprived of them. As a hobby and pastime he questioned officers and men from various outfits and compiled a series of notes based on first hand knowledge of then recent events from the men who were on the spot. These notes have been the basis of much of the material given here.

This rather lengthy explanation of the bibliography is given to explain what may appear as statements contradicting the references given. The references are used because in some cases they contained material which was unknown to the author of the monograph.

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INTRODUCTION

"The Philippines can and will be defended." In the light of what occurred from 8 December 1941 until 5 May 1942 this statement, made in 1935 by General Douglas MacArthur, may have sounded like pure bravado. However, General MacArthur based his remark on the assumption that he would be provided with the necessary equipment and time to train an efficient fighting unit. Circumstance denied him this opportunity, but the performance of the elements of the Philippine Division, the only well-trained and relatively well equipped organization in the Philippines at the outbreak of war, leads the observer to believe that there was reason in what the General had said. The action of the 57th Regimental Combat Team (P.S.) at Abucay, Bataan, Philippine Islands from 10 January 1942 until 23 January 1942 was an example of what was accomplished by troops properly trained and well led. (1)

The 57th Infantry Regimental Combat Team (P.S.), part of the Philippine Division, was organized as shown below:

57th Infantry (P.S.)

A Company, 14th Engineers (P.S.)

First Battalion, 24th Field Artillery (P.S.)

C Company, 12th Medical Battalion (P.S.)

Those units marked (P.S.) were composed of Philippine Scout enlisted men and American officers. Philippine Scout outfits were part of the Regular Army of the United States. The letters (P.A.), which will follow names of certain units referred to later, indicate the Army of the Philippine Commonwealth. Philippine Army units were composed of Filipino

enlisted men and commanded by Filipino officers. Each unit had a cadre of American officers, American enlisted men and Philippine Scout enlisted men who were acting as instructors at the time the war began. (2)

The Philippine Scouts were the product of some thirty years of American Army training. Regular army career soldiers, they regarded their profession as one of honour and trust. Discipline was excellent, with court-martials seldom being necessary. In both garrison and in the field the Scouts were superior soldiers. Their marksmanship was always high with most of the companies having records of years of 100% qualification. (3)

In February 1941 the regiment was expanded from its former strength of about 1100 to full peace time Table of Organization and Equipment strength of 126 officers and 2162 enlisted men. All during the spring and summer of 1941 intensive range firing, long marches and many varied combat problems had welded the regiment into a tough, well trained, striking force. In September a series of division maneuvers served to teach the men the functions of the combat team. A desire to out shine the personnel of their sister regiments, the 31st and 45th Infantries had developed high esprit and morale in the men. One and all they were eager to prove that the Philippine Scouts were as good combat fighters as they were garrison soldiers. (4)

In August 1941 the regiment had been called upon to furnish approximately 50% of its officers and 30% of its non-commissioned officers to train the units of the newly in-

(2) A-2, Page 7; A-6, Page 7; A-11. (3) A-2, Page 2; A-6, Page 7; A-11. (4) A-2, Page 1; A-11. (5) A-2, Page 1; A-11.

ducted Philippine Army. These officers and men were not returned upon the outbreak of war, so the regiment went into action with approximately 63 officers and 2054 enlisted men. This reduction in officer and non-commissioned officer personnel was felt very gravely during the ensuing weeks of combat. (5)

The 57th Infantry (P.S.) was organized into three battalions, a Headquarters Company, a Service Company and an Anti-tank Company. Each battalion had a headquarters detachment, a heavy weapons company and three rifle companies. Battalion staffs were composed of three officers; a battalion commander, an executive officer who was also S-2 and S-3 and a junior officer who was a combination S-1 and S-4. The enlisted section of the detachment was also skeltonized. (6)

The heavy weapons company, with a strength of two officers and 151 enlisted men, had three platoons of four 30 calibre heavy machine guns each and one platoon composed of a section of two 50 calibre machine guns and a section of two 81 M.M. mortars. Only a limited number of rounds of 81 M.M. ammunition were available. (7)

The rifle companies with a strength of one or two officers and approximately 130 enlisted men, had 3 rifle platoons of 3 squads each and a weapons platoon which contained one 4 gun 30 calibre machine gun section and one 3 gun 60 M.M. mortar section. There was no ammunition in the Philippine Islands for the 60 M.M. mortars. All riflemen were armed with the M-1 Rifle. (8)

(5) A-2, Page 1; A-11. (6) A-11. (7) A-11. (8) A-2, Page 1; A-8, Page 4; A-11.

The Anti-tank company, strength of one officer and 142 enlisted men, had one platoon of three towed M-3 37 M.M. guns and two platoons of three M-1916 37 M.M. guns each. Each platoon had one rifle squad for close-in protection. (9)

Tactical transportation was inadequate. Command vehicles were the  $\frac{1}{2}$  Ton Command and Reconnaissance Cars, weapons carriers were  $\frac{1}{2}$  Ton trucks and supply trucks were  $1\frac{1}{2}$  Ton (4 x 4) trucks. There was only one  $\frac{1}{2}$  Ton truck in the Regiment which everyone strove to obtain.) (10)

#### THE GENERAL SITUATION

Following the outbreak of the war on 8 December 1941, the Imperial Japanese Army moved swiftly. On 10 December a task force of approximately a reinforced battalion landed at Apparri. (See Map A) Thereafter in rapid succession a landing in force at Lingayen Gulf by approximately 80,000 men from 80 transports was followed by a secondary landing of some 40,000 men from 40 transports near Mauban and Antimonan. The USAFFE, (United States Armed Forces in the Far East, included at this time all troops in the Philippine Archipelago.) forces who had been assigned to beach defense in these areas were units of the newly formed Philippine Army. The troops opposing the Lingayen landing were organized into the Northern Luzon Force commanded by Major General Wainwright. Those units resisting the Mauban and Antimonan landings were organized into the Southern Luzon Force with Major General Parker commanding. Untrained, inexperienced and ill equipped, these troops were no match for the combat tried veterans of the China Campaign. In less than two weeks the two Japanese Armies, sweeping the Fil-American forces before them, effected a juncture at San Fernando and turned south to execute what they expected to be "mop up" operation against the USAFFE (9) A-2, Page 1; A-11. (10) A-11



Forces in the Bataan Peninsula. (11)

For years before the war the staffs of the Philippine Department, the predecessor of USAFFE, had been working on the plans for the defense of the island of Luzon. These plans, known as War Plan Orange, had been worked on by some of our most brilliant officers. W.P.O.-3, as the current version was called, contemplated defense of the beaches, followed, if unsuccessful, by a step by step withdrawal action to Bataan. Upon the outbreak of war 10,000 laborers, under the direction of the Engineers, were to construct three strong battle positions on the Bataan Peninsula. (See Map B) The first of these, known as the Abucay line, was to extend from north of Abucay on Manila Bay to Moron on the China Sea; the second, the Orion line, was from Orion to Bagac; and the last or final battle position was to extend east and west of Mt. Mariveles. Though these plans were classified as secret, the three positions were shown on a map accompanying an article by Melvine Jacoby which appeared in Life Magazine on 9 February 1942, two months before the attempt was made to occupy the final battle line. (12)

Like many of the "best laid plans of mice and men", the 10,000 laborers were never employed on these lines. Instead, from around 14 December until 30 December 1941, certain units which were in the USAFFE reserve were employed at this work during the time they were not on paratroop patrols and other security missions behind the lines. (13)

The 57th Infantry (P.S.) which had been held near Fort Stotsenburg from 10 December 1941 as a mobile USAFFE reserve

(11) A-7, Page 226; A-6, Page 14; A-10, Page 22; A-11.

(12) A-10, Page 9; A-1; A-11. (13) A-11.

was ordered on 30 December to move to Abucay. The mission of the regiment was to organize and to be prepared to defend the right flank of the Abucay position from Manila Bay to a point some 2000 yards west of the barrio (a Filipino word meaning village) of Mabatang. This move was completed by dawn of 31 December 1941. From that date until 9 January 1942 all men worked on strengthening the line. (14)

#### THE TERRAIN

A study of Map B will show that the ground from the bay was flat for about 2000 to 3000 yards to the west, then it began to rise gradually until it reached a height of some 3000 feet at Mt. Santa Rosa. The only surfaced road leading into the eastern half of Bataan ran through the center of the regimental sector. The integrity of the whole line depended on this road being blocked. The right of the sector was covered by several hundred yards of artificial fish ponds. These were actually formed by banks some three to four feet wide and six to eight feet high which cut the area into giant squares which were filled with water. An advance could be made on the position only by men in single file. The area in front of the left of the line, which extended west from the road, was made up of rice fields. These were dry and hard at this time of the year. Only on the extreme left was there any cover for an advancing enemy. About 200 yards from the front was a cane field, around the edges of which were scattered bamboo clumps. (15)

The barrio of Mabatang was burned to the ground by the First Battalion of the 57th Infantry (P.S.) on 7 January.

(14) A-2, Page 2-3; A-1; A-11. (15) A-9, Page 7; A-11.

This was done because it was felt that the enemy would set it afire just prior to his attack in order to take advantage of the resulting confusion. After the fires were out the fox-holes and entrenchments were camouflaged with debris. The main road provided an axis of supply and communication for the right of the regimental sector while a newly constructed road, known as the Engineer Road, some 1000 yards west provided a route for the units on the left. (16)

#### THE ORGANIZATION OF THE LINE

The First Battalion was assigned the right sector from the bay to and including the main road. (See Map E) It went into position with C Company on the right and A Company on the left. B Company was in reserve some three to four hundred yards in the rear. B Company was also charged with covering the beach from the Main Line of Resistance to the Regimental Reserve Line. It was prepared to resist any landing in that area. (17)

The Third Battalion occupied the left sector. Its front ran generally just south of the east west road. K Company on the right was deployed along the north edge of the barrio of Mabatang. I Company was between the creek and the road facing the corn field. L Company on the Battalion Reserve Line was tied in with B Company. (18)

The sector west of the Third Battalion was occupied by the 41st Division (P.A.). (19)

The Second Battalion on the Regimental Reserve Line had F Company on the right and E Company on the left. G Company  
(16) A-12, A-11. (17) A-1, A-2, A-12, A-11. (18) A-2, A-11.  
(19) A-1, A-11.

was split and given a triple mission. Two platoons plus one section of machine guns were to garrison the Outpost Line of Resistance just south of Samal. One squad was to cover the coast north and south of the mouth of the Abucay River. The remaining two squads were assigned to the straggler line. (20)

Initially regimental headquarters was established in the vicinity of the Abucay church, but later was moved into the church. Service Company was bivouaced with its trains west of Balanga. Rations were brought up after dark by kitchen trucks which returned to the bivouac before dawn. (21)

The Anti-tank Company was broken into its three platoons. The M-3 gun platoon was attached to the First Battalion and placed on the sector of A Company to cover the main road. The second platoon was given the mission of covering the coast of Manila from the M.L.R. to and including the mouth of the Abucay River. The third platoon was in the north edge of Abucay to stop any tank or armored break through down the main road. (22)

The First Battalion, 24th Field Artillery (P.S.) which was the direct support battalion of the Regimental Combat Team had placed one battery of 75 M.M. in dugout emplacements on the M.L.R. in the K Company sector. These guns had the mission of firing at enemy tanks or personnel. The other two batteries, one of 75 M.M., the other of 2.95 guns, were in firing positions to the south west and west respectively of Abucay some 3600 yards from the front.. (23)

The Second Battalion, 24th Field Artillery (P.S.) was placed in general support of the 57th Infantry (P.S.) and of the 41st Division (P.A.). This battalion was in position

(20) A-2, A-8, A-11. (21) A-2, A-11. (22) A-11. (23) A-2; A-9, Page 9; A-11.

south and south east of Abucay. (24)

Additional artillery was on call. This included a battery of Self Propelled 75 M.M. guns on the north edge of Abucay, a battery of 2.95 mountain guns located 500 yards north west of Abucay and a battery of 155 G.P.F.'s in the barrio of Capitangan a thousand yards south of Abucay. (25)

A Company, 14th Engineers (P.S.) was bivouaced in Capitangan. The Regimental Aid Station was established in the brick cloister of the church of Abucay. (26)

Fields of fire were cut in front of the Third Battalion and double apron wire was laid. In this area a large number of land mines were placed to destroy enemy tanks. The bridges on the main road between Calaguiman and Mabatang were blown. Automatic weapons were sighted in to cover the whole front. Every effort was bent toward making the line impregnable. Nothing was forgotten except to cut the cane field. During this period of preparation the rations were cut in half. This was to be evidenced later by the flagging physical endurance of all the personnel in the Regiment. (27)

#### THE DEVELOPMENT

On 30 December 1941 the Southern Luzon Force, which had successfully broken contact with the enemy, withdrew into the Bataan Peninsula. The 41st Division (P.A.) was placed on the left of the 57th Regimental Combat Team and the 51st Division (P.A.) was placed on the left of the 41st. (See Map B) The Luzon Force Headquarters was redesignated the II Philippine Corps Headquarters and given the control of the 57th Regimental Combat Team, the 41st and 51st Divisions. The Northern Luzon Force reinforced by the 31st Infantry (U.S.) endeavored to stop the enemy advance at Layac Junction but

(24) A-1, A-11. (25) A-1, A-11. (26) A-11. (27) A-2, Page 2; A-8, Page 8; A-12; A-11.

was forced from its position on 6 January 1942. The elements of this command withdrew in disorder through the lines of the 57th Infantry (P.S.) leaving nothing between the enemy and G Company on the O.P.L.R.. The Japs, suspicious of this precipitous retreat, advanced cautiously fearing a trap. A reconnaissance patrol of the 57th Headquarters Company made contact  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile south of Hermosa on 9 January, but withdrew after a brief fire fight. On the following day the enemy was located by a similar patrol some 1000 yards west of Orani. Finally late in the afternoon of the 10th the leading elements struck the O.P.L.R. which withdrew after a short engagement. Realizing the necessity for observing the enemy's movements, the Regimental Commander of the 57th Infantry (P.S.), Colonel G.S. Clarke, ordered the O.P.L.R. reestablished on the Caligiman River. This was done early on 11 January. (28)

Since the 6th, Japanese air activity had been heavy. The barrios of Hermosa, Orani, Calaguiman, and Balanga had been bombed and partially destroyed. Only Abucay and Samal had been spared. The latter offered an excellent assembly area for forces planning to attack the Fil-American lines. The decision was made to burn it, but since enemy patrols were already in the area this presented a difficult problem. Request was made to have the artillery place fire on the village with incendiary shells, but it was found to be impossible as the artillery had no incendiary shells. Captain Wermuth, of the First Battalion, volunteered to enter the village to attempt to burn it using gasoline. This he did. Exactly at 1700 on the 11th a thin curl of smoke was seen ascending from the vicinity of Samal. In accordance with a (28) A-1; A-2, Page 3; A-8, Page 10; A-11; A-12.

prearranged plan the artillery of two batteries of the Second Battalion of the 24th Field Artillery (P.S.) lowered a box barrage on the barrio thus preventing the Nipponese from following Captain Wermuth. Inside of a few hours the majority of the buildings in the town had burned to the ground. (29)

During the day the Japanese had deployed his advance party and around 1800, by sheer weight of numbers, had again forced the O.P.L.R. to withdraw. Night found the troops on the M.L.R. alerted and ready for an attack. They did not have long to wait. About 2300 the enemy opened up with a heavy barrage of artillery and mortars. This was followed soon after by small arms fire from the cane field. (See Map E) Upon request of Lt. Colonel P.T.Fry, the Third Battalion Commander, the 24th Field Artillery fired the concentrations that covered this area. No sooner had this begun than the Japanese burst from the cane field. Screaming, "Banzai", in a frenzied fashion, the leading men hurled themselves on the barbed wire and made bridges of their bodies over which the remainder passed. All weapons on the American front line opened up on them. The battery of the Second Battalion, 24th Field Artillery, fired shrapnel at point blank range. Though dozens of men dropped, the others by their very ferocity, forced the men of I Company out of their foxholes and back several hundred yards. The left flank of K Company was also forced back. The Third Battalion Commander threw in the Reserve Company and succeeded in restoring the line. Gradually the firing subsided until there were only sporadic bursts. The weary men of the Third Battalion dug in and anxiously awaited the coming of dawn. Day light revealed (29) A-12; A-4, Page 234; A-11.

that the enemy dead were numerous. Estimates varied from 200 to 300 killed. The regiment too had suffered but not heavily.)  
(30)

A new danger now appeared. Though the enemy had failed to dislodge our troops, they themselves had not all been ejected. Many had filtered through our lines and taken up camouflaged positions in the bushes and trees. During the day these snipers fired with devastating accuracy at the men moving around in our lines. After two officers and several enlisted men were killed, a systematic attempt was made to clear the area. 1st Lieutenant Alexander R. Nininger of A Company volunteered to lead a party through the I and K Company sector and eliminate this menace. In the ensuing two trips the anti-sniper group killed a large number of the enemy but suffered so heavily themselves that Major R. Reynolds, the First Battalion Commander, ordered them to desist. Lieutenant Nininger, realizing the gravity of this menace to our troops, ordered his men to remain in their positions while he, armed with grenades and a pistol, rushed back for a third try. He succeeded in bagging a few more before he himself fell mortally wounded. His heroic action was recognized by Congress who awarded him the first Medal of Honor of World War II. This method having failed to eliminate all the snipers, A Company, 14th Engineers was called upon to use demolitions to blow out the trees. While a base of fire was laid on the trees, the Engineers moved in and blew them down. This system proved effective and for a time there were no more casualties from the enemy snipers. (31)

(30) A-1, A-2, A-8, A-9, A-11. (31) A-1; A-2; A-7, Page 252; A-8; A-9; A-11; A-12.



During the day of the 12th the enemy was active but did not again attack in force. About 2200 shouts and other confused sounds from the cane field indicated that they were preparing another offensive. An hour later the assault came but was shattered before it reached our lines by the well aimed firing of the support artillery of the Second Battalion, 24th Field Artillery (P.S.). At 0430 on 13 January the attack was resumed by what was estimated as a reinforced battalion. I and K Companies were forced back to the Battalion Reserve Line. Enemy artillery had knocked out the telephone line from I Company so that the company commander was unable to report the situation to the battalion commander. The 41st Infantry (P.A.) and the First Battalion, 57th Infantry (P.S.) refused their flanks and assisted by firing into the salient occupied by the enemy. L Company was used to bolster the line, while E Company of the Reserve Battalion was moved up to attempt a counter attack. This was launched at dawn following a heavy artillery barrage. The enemy timing his fire cleverly started throwing mortar shells into the area of the Third Battalion. Thinking their own artillery was falling short the front line troops called for the fire to lift. (This error was to occur several times before the men learned to sense the rounds.) The lack of proper fire support so handicaped the counter attack it bogged down after advancing a short distance. In the ensuing fire fight the enemy forced one platoon of E Company to abandon its heavy machine guns. (32)

#### THE COUNTER ATTACK

Realizing that additional force would be necessary to reestablish the line Colonel Clarke asked for reinforcements. (32) A-2, A-9, A-11.

Two battalions of the 21st Infantry (P.A.) were attached at 1700 on 13 January. Plans were made for one battalion, (Third), to counter attack at dawn on the 14th behind a rolling barrage to restore the K Company sector. During the night I and K Companies were pulled from the line and placed in a reorganization area on the left of the R.R.L.. At dawn the attack jumped off. At first the advance was unopposed but as it reached the rear of the former M.L.R. it was stopped by heavy mortar fire and forced to dig in. (See Overlay MapC) (33)

In the afternoon the other battalion, (Second), of the 21st Infantry (P.A.) attacked to the west of the Third Battalion, 21st Infantry (P.A.) and brought the line back to within 150 yards of its initial position. The Second Battalion, 57th Infantry (P.S.) was placed in close support on the former B.R.L. to reinforce against a possible counter attack. (34)

An examination of the retaken ground revealed that it was dotted with undetonated Stokes Mortar rounds. It was found that approximately 60% of the rounds fired were duds. Thus the enemy moved through our mortar barrage with relatively few casualties. Request for 81 M.M. ammunition was answered by the report that no more was available. The 60 M.M. mortars which were ideal for such action likewise had no ammunition. The lack of this ammunition which rendered these two valuable weapons practically useless was sorely felt. (35)

Casualties in the 57th Infantry (P.S.) had been high, but were still far less than those of the enemy. I Company had lost both its officers, its first sergeant, all but one of its line sergeants and about two thirds of its corporals.

(33) A-9, A-2, A-11. (34) A-2, A-11. (35) A-2, A-11.

Total losses in the battalion amounted to approximately forty killed and sixty wounded. The Second Battalion had lost one officer and the First Battalion two officers. The enlisted casualties in the two battalions numbered about a dozen killed and twice that number wounded. The largest percentage came from snipers. Enemy losses were exceedingly high. It was estimated that some three hundred fell in the several attacks, while an equal number were believed killed by the artillery fire. (36)

On the 15th, the 22nd Infantry (P.A.) was attached to the 57th Infantry (P.S.). After remaining on the R.R.L. for twenty-four hours, two battalions moved up and took over the sector occupied by the two battalions of the 21st Infantry (P.A.) which was released from regimental control. The Third Battalion, 22nd Infantry (P.A.) was moved into the R.R.L. on the right relieving F Company, 57th Infantry (P.S.) which was moved over into the west sector of the R.R.L. with the remainder of the Second Battalion. (See Overlay Map D) (37)

After failing to penetrate the line in the 57th Infantry (P.S.) sector, the Japanese moved the bulk of their forces westward and began a series of attacks on the front of the 41st Division (P.A.). Activity on the 57th Infantry (P.S.) front dwindled to occasional bursts of mortar and small arms fire intended to harass and keep the troops in their foxholes. Japanese Artillery was shifted from the front to the rear areas where it engaged in interdiction and counterbattery fire. Good fire adjustment and superior shooting by the 155 M.M. G.P.F. of the 86th Field Artillery (P.S.) succeeded in knock-

(36) A-2, A-11. (37) A-2; A-9, Page 11; A-11.

ing out several batteries of the enemy. The lighter artillery of the 24th Field Artillery (P.S.) again and again caught Japanese troops moving or in assembly areas and wreaked havoc with them. In fact, so devastating was their fire, the enemy ceased making daylight moves in those areas that fell within range of the Scout Artillery. (38)

#### THE LULL

Fearing that the lull on the 57th Front was merely to get the Fil-American forces careless and to permit the enemy to launch a successful surprise assault, the new Regimental Commander, Colonel Funk, who had relieved Colonel Clarke on 14 January, began planning steps to thwart the enemy. The cane field, which had served to mask the enemy's preparations for an assault, still contained an unknown number of troops. Because of its proximity to the M.L.R. it served as an excellent place from which small groups could crawl at night into the lines to harass and snipe. Obviously, something had to be done to eliminate this threat. (39)

A request was made to II Corps for tanks to over-run the cane field and permit the Infantry to either burn or cut the cane. The Tank Group Commander came up and after a brief reconnaissance decided that the ground was not suited for tank employment. This decision was protested by the 57th Infantry (P.S.) Regimental Staff, but to no avail. (40)

Failing to get the tanks, the Regimental S-3, Major Johnson, requested the Air Corps to employ incendiary bombs. Again the answer was, "No". The Air Corps at this time had approximately a dozen P-40's which were employed only on (38) A-1, A-2, A-11. (39) A-11. (40) A-11.

reconnaissance missions. Furthermore, all incendiary bombs had been abandoned at Clark and Nichols Fields. The Air Corps did send two parachute flares which they said would burn with the heat intensity of an incendiary bomb. (41)

Captain Wermuth offered to take a group of men into the cane field and there to set off the flares. On the 16th of January the attempt was made, but the Japanese surprised the raiding party just as the first flare was ignited. Before the cane could be properly set afire the enemy brought such heavy fire to bear that Captain Wermuth withdrew his men leaving two dead behind him. This ended the attempts to burn the cane field. From this time until the position was evacuated the artillery fired concentrations of shrapnel on it whenever the front line units reported hearing sounds of enemy activity. (42)

During the period 16 January to 23 January enemy planes were overhead constantly during the daylight hours. A reconnaissance plane, known by the men as "Photo Joe", observed the artillery fire of the Scout Batteries and directed the enemy counter battery fire. Any firing by friendly artillery was followed by intense enemy dive bombing and artillery retaliation. (43)

Another extremely annoying feature was the renewal of the activity of the enemy snipers. These had penetrated several hundred yards behind the M.L.R. and kept the troops constantly harassed. To add to the confusion, the planes dropped a form of firecracker that went off either singly or in bursts, some time after striking the ground, giving the impression of small arms fire in the rear. Anti-sniper platoons formed in

(41) A-11. (42) A-11. (43) A-11.

each battalion and an anti-sniper company organized and employed under regimental control were kept busy investigating and eliminating these snipers. The anti-sniper company also executed one or two raids into the enemy lines bringing back (equipment and information. (44)

On the 18th of January C Company reported that enemy estimated at a battalion were being massed around and to the east of Caliguiman. Before any action could be taken an enemy tank rounded the curve south of Caliguiman and headed along the road toward the First Battalion Front. The alert gunners of the M-3, 37 M.M. Anti-tank platoon opened fire before the tank had gone 100 yards. The first round went over but the second was followed by a blinding flash. The tank stopped dead and two men jumped out and ran for safety pursued by machine gun fire from A Company. Thus ended the first and only attempt by the enemy to use tanks against the 57th Infantry (P.S.). (45)

While this was going on a request for fire had reached the artillery. Within a few minutes the enemy concentrations were receiving heavy shrapnel and high explosive fire which inflicted considerable casualties and threw the survivors into such confusion they withdrew. Following this abortive action the enemy made no further effort to penetrate the 57th Infantry (P.S.) lines. (46)

#### THE WITHDRAWAL

While the 57th Infantry (P.S.) had been enjoying relative quiet on its front, the units on its left had been receiving fierce attacks. (See Map B) The 41st Division (P.A.), though (44) A-11. (45) A-11. (46) A-11.

hard hit, managed to keep its lines fairly well intact. The 51st Division (P.A.), however, was not as steady a unit. After taking a terrific pounding of shelling and bombing, it began to withdraw. On 17 January, the Commanding General of the II Corps threw the 31st Infantry (U.S.) in to try to stem the tide. This proved insufficient so the 45th Infantry (P.S.) was committed on the night of 17 January. Notwithstanding the efforts of these fine units the line was forced gradually backward. For four days desperate fighting went on around the Abucay Hacienda. As a last resort the Corps Commander, General G.M.Parker, decided to use the 57th Infantry (P.S.) to try to tip the scales in favor of the Fil-Americans. On the evening of the 21st the Third Battalion, 22nd Infantry (P.A.) was alerted and moved up behind the First Battalion, 57th Infantry (P.S.). During the night the First Battalion was relieved and moved to an assembly area south west of Abucay. (47)

The Regiment was warned to expect action in the vicinity of the Hacienda at a moments notice. The S-1 and S-2 were sent to contact the Philippine Division Commander, General M.S.Lough, who was then acting sector commander of the 41st and 51st Divisions (P.A.) fronts. Upon arrival at General Lough's Command Post they were informed that plans were already under way to break contact and withdraw to the Second Battle Position, so that the 57th Infantry (P.S.) was not to be used. (48)

Early on the 23rd the order came for the Regiment to be prepared to move out at dark to an intermediate position west of Balanga. By midnight all units cleared Abucay. The battle of Abucay was over. (49)

(47) A-1, A-2, A-11. (48) A-11. (49) A-1, A-2, A-11.

### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In general the performance of the 57th Infantry Regimental Combat Team at Abucay was superior. Throughout the action the Philippine Scouts demonstrated the importance of proper training and good discipline. Though they were attacked many times and usually outnumbered they remained firm and steady under the pressure. Even when forced from their position in the I and K Company sector they withdrew in good order and grudgingly contested every foot of ground. The lessons learned in rifle marksmanship before the war were substantiated by the large number of casualties which the enemy received from the accurate rifle fire of the Scouts. The morale of the Regiment, which had been high prior to the battle, rose higher with each succeeding engagement so that when it was finally withdrawn it had been transformed into an aggressive and high spirited unit. The only fear that was expressed by the men was that they would not have an opportunity to get another crack at the enemy. When placed in a defensive situation, such as the battle of Abucay, which called for steadiness, control and dependability, the Scout soldier was excellent. The only quality of a good soldier that occasionally was absent was the ability to seize the initiative. This can be laid, in a large measure, to the failure in pre-war training to sufficiently emphasize its importance. The lack of this attribute was demonstrated in I Company when the two officers were killed. The non-commissioned officers, though able to carry out successfully the orders given to them by officers, were at a loss when they no longer had this authority to direct them. As a result of this inability of the senior non-commissioned officers to cope with the situation



the company fell temporarily into confusion which was not dispelled until the Battalion Commander sent an officer from another company to assume command.

Adequate supply of ammunition for all weapons is an essential in any military operation. As was proved in this action as well as in all operations in which the American Army participated in World War II the mortars, both 60 M.M. and 81 M.M., are among the most valuable weapons with which the Infantry fights. The failure to have sufficient ammunition for these guns seriously reduced the fire power of the regiment. Had the heavy weapons companies been supplied with the proper amount of 81 M.M. ammunition and the rifle companies with 60 M.M. the enemy troops, massed in the cane field, would have suffered far more heavily than they did.

Proper preparation of a defensive position includes elimination, if possible, of all natural features which may provide the enemy cover in his advance to the attack. The cane field should have been cut before the enemy had the opportunity to occupy it. Had this avenue of approach been denied the Japanese troops they would have been forced to cross 700 yards of exposed terrain which was covered by our small arms weapons. It is extremely doubtful that more than one attempt would have been made to attack the 57th Infantry (P.S.) front. Furthermore, the snipers, who caused so many casualties, would not have been able to infiltrate our lines as easily as they did.

Communication is vital in military organizations. Unless a unit is able to report immediately to higher headquarters giving the situation as it was developed, the support group may not be able to render assistance in time. This was forcefully illustrated in the case of I Company. Had the

company commander been able to inform the battalion commander of the intensity of the attack which he was receiving the latter would have been able to throw L Company in to reinforce I Company in sufficient time to prevent that unit from being forced out of its position. Again, had the Third Battalion been able at once to notify the Artillery that its fire was falling short, several casualties might have been avoided.

Cooperation is one of the most important of the principles of war. This applies not only within an organization but also among organizations. The cane field represented a distinct menace to the security, not only of the 57th Infantry (P.S.) sector, but also to the defense of the whole Bataan Peninsula. The refusal of the tank and Air Corps commanders to assist in the elimination of this threat might have resulted in the collapse of the whole line and perhaps even of the whole Bataan Defense Force.

Defense is divided into two categories: the active and the passive. The action of the 57th Regimental Combat Team during this period was definitely passive. While the enemy was placing increasing pressure on the front of the 41st and the 51st Divisions (P.A.) the 57th Infantry (P.S.) was enjoying comparative quiet. From 16 January until 23 January the Second and Third Battalions, 57th Infantry (P.S.) were available and eager for action. Had a reconnaissance in force or an attack been launched by these outfits it might have succeeded in disrupting the enemy plans and delaying the breakthrough which he accomplished on 22 - 23 January.

Infantry alone is seldom capable of independent action. It is necessary that weapons of a calibre heavier than those

that are organic to an infantry regiment be employed. The success of the 57th Infantry Regimental Combat Team was due, in not a small measure, to the fine fire support rendered by the 24th Field Artillery (P.S.).

Air superiority is necessary to make possible the isolation of the battle field. The Infantry and Field Artillery were more than a match for the Japanese opposing them, but often their operation, especially that of the artillery, was handicapped by the fact that the enemy was able to bomb and strafe at will.

The Japanese snipers and firecrackers affected the defense far more than their attacks. Though the men of the 57th Regimental Combat Team did not crack under these psychological forms of harassing, many of the outfits of the Philippine Army did.

### LESSONS

Some of the lessons taught by this operation are:

1. Every possible enemy avenue of approach to a defensive position should be either eliminated or covered by fire.
2. Dependable means of communication should be established. If possible more than one should be available in case of emergency.
3. All units should cooperate to the fullest to accomplish the mission.
4. Security, both tactical and strategic, must be maintained at all times.
5. Every opportunity should be taken to seize the offensive.
- ✓ 6. All weapons should be adequately supplied with ammunition.

7. Proper training is essential to success in combat.  
This includes developing the attributes of leadership in non-commissioned officers.

8. Insufficient rations soon lower the fighting capacity of an organization.

9. Supporting weapons play a great part in any action.

10. Psychological means often succeed where physical attempts fail.